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NEWS AND NOTES

THE FOURTH ANNUAL PUBLIC-SPEAKING CONFERENCE

The Public-Speaking Conference of the New England and North Atlantic States includes in its membership instructors from the colleges of New England, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. At the meeting held in Lampson Lyceum of Yale University, March 24 and 25, fifteen of the leading colleges of these states were represented, some of them by several instructors. Professor Erastus Palmer of the College of the City of New York, president of the conference, opened the meeting with an address of welcome, in which he traced the history of the conference from its first meeting at Swarthmore in 1910, through its meetings at City College in 1911, and University of Pennsylvania in 1912. Among the important topics upon the program were the following: "The Dividing Line between Departments of English and Public Speaking," discussed by James Milton O'Neill, Dartmouth College; "The Ideal Qualifications for a Teacher of Public Speaking," Irvah L. Winter, Harvard University; "Breathing and Voice Production," Azubah J. Latham, Teachers College, New York; "Use of Current Topics in the Classroom," Benjamin P. DeWitt, New York University; "The Relation of Parliamentary Law to Public-Speaking Courses," Bromley Smith, Bucknell University; "A System of Phonetics," Victor O. Freeburg, College of the City of New York.

The last-named paper developed a system of phonetics varying slightly from the much-used international system, and revealed the fact that the system called the National Education Association phonetic system (which by the way seems to be a misnomer, inasmuch as the National Education Association refused to adopt it) is the simplest system yet devised. Some members of the conference felt that agreement upon some simple system is much more important than emphasizing minor differences.

If we are seriously to undertake the teaching of an accurate and refined oral language, we must find some remedy for the chaotic conditions that now prevail in phonetic nomenclature. Although Professor Freeburg's paper was a contribution of importance to the literature on phonetics, it could hardly be called a solution of the vexed problem.

Among the many profitable features of the program was the Round Table, in which was discussed the meaning of the phrase "oral English." The readers of the *Journal* may later on be interested in the definition that was indorsed. The wisdom of admitting high-school teachers to the conference was discussed; also, the unwisdom of publishing debate briefs, proper rules for intercollegiate debates, judges of debate, professional coaching, the possibilities of a contest in extemporaneous speaking, and other questions relating to these topics and of immediate importance to the departments of public speaking. Out of this meeting grew the suggestion of a plan for a debating league embracing as many colleges as would care to discuss some question of large current interest, on the same night. The groups already formed under the triangular or pentangular, or dual agreements, would need only to accept the date, the question, and the rules, to come into the league. This plan would make possible a central committee of control, the standardization of rules, the assembling of a large list of expert judges, and would help to remedy some of the obvious defects of our present practice, as well as attract public attention in an effective way to the investigations carried on by our college debaters. Out of this meeting, too, grew the appointment of a committee to draw up a set of rules for intercollegiate debate. The report of the Committee on Oral English in the Schools was received, and the work commended. The committee was continued and was authorized to reorganize in any way to co-operate with the committee of the National Education Association and the National Council to the greatest advantage.

Among the important actions taken by the conference was the passing of a resolution accepting an invitation to affiliate with the National Council of Teachers of English. The conference is glad to share in the larger work being undertaken by the National Council, and hopes that the consideration of public oral expression will receive due consideration in all of its deliberations.

President Palmer, who for two years had presided over the meetings of the conference, passed the gavel to Professor J. A. Winans of Cornell as his successor, and Professor Wetzel of Yale gave way to Professor O'Neill of Dartmouth as secretary. An invitation to hold the next meeting at Harvard was accepted.

ELMER W. SMITH

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

THE ALABAMA MEETING OF ENGLISH TEACHERS

The Alabama Educational Association held its annual meeting in Montgomery on March 20-22. The English teachers of the High-School Section of the association met on the afternoon of March 21. The following papers were read: "Oral English in the High School," Miss Sarah Luther, teacher of English, Troy Normal School, Troy, Ala.; "Devices for Vitalizing Composition Work," Miss Aline Bright, teacher of English, Barton Academy, Mobile, Ala.; "Teaching Poetry," O. D. Wanamaker, professor of English, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Ala.; "Dramatizing in Literature Classes," C. C. Certain, teacher of English, Central High School, Birmingham, Ala.; "An English Teachers' Association of Alabama," general discussion.

The papers were the basis for a hearty and enthusiastic discussion of "ways and means" in the English class. In this there was a very wholesome exchange of experiences and ideas, and many helpful suggestions were made for the improvement of our methods of teaching. It is particularly gratifying to report that a great deal of attention is being given to the question of oral work by the teachers of the state. In the discussion of devices for vitalizing composition work, one rather interesting suggestion was offered for the vitalization of composition through the correlated study of travel and art.

The most important feature of the meeting was the formation of plans for the organization of a state association of English teachers. It is hoped that the association will be definitely organized within a short time, and prepared to affiliate with the National Council of Teachers of English in the furtherance of its useful work. The council, indeed, through the influence of the *Journal*, is already a factor in the uplift of the teaching of English among the teachers of Alabama.

C. C. CERTAIN

THE FOREIGNER IN OUR SCHOOLS

The New England Association of Teachers of English held its twelfth annual spring meeting on Saturday, March 15, in Huntington Hall, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The general topic for discussion was "The Foreigner in Our Schools." The various phases of this subject were most helpfully discussed by Professor Wiener of Harvard, Miss Vida Scudder of Wellesley, Miss Alice L. Mahy of Providence, Mr. Louis Levin of Boston, the Misses Bigelow, Colleton,

and Nichols of the Hancock School of Boston, and by Miss Helen Cohen of the Washington Irving High School, New York City.

While the problem presented is not one that directly faces every teacher in New England, it nevertheless proved most stimulating to the entire audience. The discussion brought vividly before us the tremendous difficulties which some of our schools are meeting, and it offered helpful suggestions for improvement.

One point that especially impressed the association was the fact that these foreigners have something to offer us. They come with genuine enthusiasm for their work, unspoiled by the routine of the schoolroom, and they manifest a great desire to learn of our language and our institutional life. They offer us inspiration in their appreciation of music and other arts, and they provide us with a great store of interesting legends.

Professor Wiener's discussion of the problem, in which he attacked our American schools and practices, was especially interesting. It was helpful, too, in the questions which he aroused. How far are we, as a group of English teachers, responsible for this lethargic attitude toward scholarly attainment and for the long drills that develop little but sluggishness? The fact that we did not accept as true all of the severe strictures against existing attempts did not lessen our interest in the good-tempered philippic.

The Executive Committee has reason to feel abundantly satisfied with the results of the March meeting. Many persons who know little of our work were drawn to the meeting by their interest in the subject. Many members of our association who are not themselves confronted by the problem of the foreign born, were brought into sympathetic touch with the active workers in the foreign quarters. Many who have thought of the presence of the foreigners as a hampering influence to the schools were led to see the possibility of converting this alien presence into an asset. The entire program was wholesomely stimulating.

By vote of the association the president was directed to appoint a Committee on the Training of English Teachers. This committee is to investigate what work in this field is now being carried on. It will also investigate the efficiency of the present methods and try to determine how fully present demands for training are being met. If it finds that there is further work it will make recommendations to the colleges and the normal schools for increased attention to these lines. The motion requires a report at the March meeting of 1914.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: Oscar C. Gallagher, Boston High School of Commerce, President; E. Charlton

Black, of Boston University, Vice-President; Frank W. C. Hersey, of Harvard University, Secretary-Treasurer; Charles Swain Thomas, of the Newton High School, Editor. The Executive Committee consists of these officers and Elizabeth Richardson, Girls' High School, Boston; Alfred M. Hitchcock, Public High School, Hartford, Conn.; William D. Parkinson, Superintendent of Schools, Waltham, Mass., and Clara F. Palmer, Chicopee High School, Chicopee, Mass.

C. S. T.

THE SPRING CONFERENCE IN PHILADELPHIA

Among the new and flourishing city associations of English teachers is the English Club of Philadelphia. On April 5 the spring conference was held in the West Philadelphia High School for Boys. The chief speaker was Franklin T. Baker, of Teachers College, New York City. His topic was, "The English Teacher's Opportunity." Several members of the club spoke on "Echoes from the Recent Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English." Among these were William W. Chandler, of the Southern High School for Boys, Emma L. Newitt, of the Philadelphia High School for Girls, Elizabeth Tait, of the Philadelphia Normal School, John D. Mahoney, of the West Philadelphia High School for Boys, George E. Roth, of Central High School, Lillian K. Wyman, of William Penn High School, William L. Kershaw of North East High School, and Catharine Jones and Beulah A. Fenimore, of North East High School for Girls. The conference was planned by a special committee, including the officers for 1912-13. Elizabeth Lodor, of William Penn High School, is president and Vincent B. Brecht, of North East High School, is secretary.

THE SPELLING VOCABULARIES OF PERSONAL AND BUSINESS LETTERS

During January, 1913, Leonard Ayres, of the Russell Sage Foundation, conducted a study of the vocabularies of 2,000 short business and personal letters. The letters were drawn from twelve sources: those received by a mail-order house, a physician, a newspaper, a lawyer, a publishing firm, the secretaries of a Y.W.C.A., a playground association, a philanthropic association, by teachers from parents, by a query department of a magazine, personal family letters, and love letters. The total number of words amounted to 110,160.

In tabulating, the first word of each line was chosen, the salutations

and endings being handled separately. This process yielded 23,629 words and an actual vocabulary of 2,001 separate words. Of these 751 appeared only once, while one of them appeared 1,080 times; 542 words constituted seven-eighths of the entire vocabulary.

Mr. Ayres states that no final conclusions are to be drawn from the report. He thinks, however, that without doubt attempt has been made to teach the children in the elementary school far more words than necessary, and that careful investigation should be made to determine what words the pupils will actually need to know how to spell. These should be thoroughly taught. He adds that it is probably useless to teach school children to spell words not actually in their working vocabularies.

The report may be had for five cents by addressing the Russell Sage Foundation, 400 Metropolitan Tower, New York City.

THE BLAKE SOCIETY

Admirers of William Blake met at Hampstead on August 12, 1912 (the poet's birthday), and founded a society. The object is "to draw together admirers of the poet-painter . . . and to encourage the study of his works." Membership tickets are issued for a minimum contribution of seven shillings every two years. This will entitle the holder to attend the meetings of the society and to receive the society's publications. Members of the Cowper Society may become members of the Blake Society by the payment of two shillings every two years and vice versa.

Regular meetings will be held in London, at Chichester or at Pelham, on or near August 12 in each year. The next meeting will be held in Lambeth Palace. Those wishing information or desiring to join the society should address the secretary, Thomas Wright, Olney, Bucks, England.

THE LONGFELLOW BIRTHPLACE

The Longfellow Society is making an effort to preserve the poet's birthplace at Portland, Maine, as a national memorial. The activities of the society, which are international in scope, are centered in Chicago, where over 100,000 autographs of school children have been secured for presentation in the memorial. Any who are interested may address the president, Arthur C. Jackson, Congress Hotel, Chicago.